

MAR - 3 1993

Before the
FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION
Washington, D.C. 20554

FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION
OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY

In the matter of)
)
Amendment of Part 97)
of the Commission's Rules)
to Set Aside a Portion of the)
Amateur 222 to 225 MHz Band)
for Other Than Repeater Use,)
and Amend the Rules Relative)
to Novice Privileges)

NPRM Docket 92-289

To: The Commission

COMMENTS OF

THE VALLEY EMERGENCY RADIO ASSOCIATION (VERA)

Valley Emergency Radio Assn.
P. O. Box 4357
Chatsworth, CA 91313-4357
805/491-3916

Prepared by
James T. Fortney, K6IYK
President

February 20, 1993

INDEX

SUMMARY OF POSITION	PAGE 2
BACKGROUND INFORMATION	PAGE 3
DEVELOPMENT OF ALTERNATIVE PROPOSAL	PAGE 4
TO REGULATE OR NOT TO REGULATE	PAGE 6
DEMOCRACY AT WORK	PAGE 8
RECAP	PAGE 9

No. of Copies rec'd
List A B C D E

2411

SUMMARY OF POSITION

The Valley Emergency Radio Association (VERA) wishes to comment on the proposed rule changes and declare the following position:

1. In general, **Amateur use of allocated VHF and UHF spectrum should be established and coordinated by recognized formal regional coordination bodies.** Leadership efforts by the American Radio Relay League are appropriate when inter-regional or National issues are involved. Establishing mode usage assignments by regulation should be avoided unless there is clear evidence that regulations are required in order to provide a basis for determining legal compliance.
2. If the Commission determines that regulation of the use of specific modes on the 222 to 225 MHz Band is required, **VERA wishes to support the findings and proposal of the 220SMA that the segment assigned for non-repeater usage be from 222.000 to 222.110 MHz.** (Please see detail discussion.)
3. Enhancement of Novice Class operating privileges to include Control Operator authority and expanded use of the 220 MHz and 1.2 GHz Bands is consistent with those same privileges being available to the No-code Technician Class operator. **However,** we do feel that if these classes of operator are to have such privileges, then the testing administered for those classes of license should address the technical issues and involved regulations to a greater extent than they do today. (This also reflects a

general opinion that relaxation of the outdated Morse Code requirements should be accompanied by a more extensive examination of technical and regulatory understanding.)

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The Valley Emergency Radio Association (VERA) is a California State chartered Association of Amateur Radio operators organized for the purpose of supporting Amateur Radio facilities dedicated to Public Service. The Association is active in providing support communications services and facilities in times of emergency to agencies such as the Federal Emergency Management Agency, the California State Office of Emergency Services, the California Highway Patrol, the Los Angeles County Disaster Communications Service, local Fire and Police Departments, the American Red Cross, and the Salvation Army.

VERA and its members make extensive use of the Amateur 222 to 225 MHz Band and the **Association currently supports both voice repeater and packet radio simplex** installations on this Band. Operations of the Association were severely impacted when the 220 to 222 MHz Band segment was reallocated to the Land Mobile Service and the local Frequency Coordination Body (220SMA - The 220 MHz Spectrum Management Association of Southern California) established a new band plan that heavily favored voice repeater operation over other modes.

The author is the President of VERA, and is also the current President of the 220SMA and a member of the Board of Directors of the Southern California Digital Communications Council (The SCDCC is the sub-coordinator for digital segments

of the VHF and UHF bands.) Although, this submittal does not purport to speak for either the 220SMA or the SCDCC (those groups have each authorized the submission of their own comments), **VERA does wish to support the alternative band usage proposal approved by the 220SMA General Membership at their January 1993 General Meeting.**

This proposal was developed by an ad-hoc committee that I established as the President of the 220SMA. The committee consisted of respected representatives from the weak signal, simplex, packet, and voice repeater segments of the 220 MHz user community. It was successful in developing a compromise position to the request for a 150 kHz non-repeater segment originally generated by the weak signal community.

DEVELOPMENT OF ALTERNATIVE PROPOSAL

The primary participants on the 220SMA ad-hoc committee to study band use requirements were; two recognized leaders of the weak signal and VHF/UHF experimentation segment, two repeater owners as representatives of the repeater community (included Committee Chairman, Mark Gilmore - WB6RHQ), two Board Members from the SCDCC representing the packet radio segment, and a well known 220 MHz operator who uses simplex as well as repeaters and is actively involved with the frequency coordination process in the broadcast industry. These Amateurs, and others, met on several occasions in an attempt to identify what the real requirements are for Amateur operation on the 222 to 225 MHz Band in Southern California.

The weak signal position initially was that a 150 kHz segment located next to the bottom band edge was mandatory. This was the position developed at the West Coast VHF/UHF Conference in early 1992. Contrasting with that requirement was the repeater users position that the band is "full" and that in portions of Southern California there have been operators standing in line to obtain repeater coordination for over three years. The packet representatives explained the impact the loss of the bottom of the Band had on their operations, and everyone agreed that more open use simplex bandwidth is needed.

The committee investigated a variety of options including; changing the standard repeater offset and/or the frequency spacing of repeater channels, and revising the mix of repeater versus non-repeater operations. Discussions of necessary bandwidth and reasonable sideband protection resulted in a general consensus that the weak signal/SSB community needed at least 70 kHz of dedicated spectrum in order to provide for weak signal, beacon, and calling channel operations. Recognition of the need to have the National SSB Calling Channel as part of the allocation resulted in consideration being given to relocating that assignment which is currently at 222.100 MHz. The weak signal representatives even agreed to take that idea to the Mid-West VHF/UHF Conference and present it there for discussion.

When it was determined that the National Calling Channel could not be easily changed, the alternative of establishing a 110 kHz non-repeater allocation, where non-intensive uses such as control transmitters and casual FM simplex operation could share the bandwidth with weak signal, SSB, and Calling Channel assignments, was proposed. This approach would also provide more bandwidth for

assignment to higher intensity uses, such as packet user and forwarding channels, in the corresponding 110 kHz segment at 223.6 to 223.71 MHz (1.6 MHz higher).

At the last meeting of the ad-hoc committee, the individual members agreed to present this seemingly workable proposal to members of the Amateur community in their segment, and to seek acceptance of this concept. The repeater representatives communicated this approach to as many groups and individuals as they could reach and at the January 1993 220SMA General Meeting, the proposal was presented and accepted by the membership in attendance. Likewise the digital representatives have reported back to the packet community through the SCDCC. At their January Board Meeting, the Directors voted to endorse and support this proposal. The wide spread weak signal community is not as easy to communicate with, but recent discussions with Wayne Overbeck, N6MB, (well-known weak signal operator) suggested that the ideas were in harmony with what that community was asking for when they went to the ARRL Board asking for their intervention, and that he would publicize the proposal.

TO REGULATE OR NOT TO REGULATE

Experience has taught the Amateur Radio community that in order to maintain the flexibility which allows for growth in a hobby where technology and needs change daily, **unnecessary regulation is to be avoided.** It stifles adaptation. Unfortunately, experience has also taught us that special interests sometimes are able, at least temporarily, to take control and adversely impact the growth and enjoyment of the hobby for others. Although regulation does not guarantee a

solution to these kinds of problems, it supposedly provides a vehicle for dealing with the situation.

The general tone of FCC actions in regard to the Amateur Service over the past few years suggests that the Commission feels the Service has proven its ability to govern itself. **Regulation has been reduced** in almost every area, and only when the Service clearly demonstrates it is unable to manage itself, has the FCC needed to step in and enforce the regulations. **VERA believes that this approach is positive.** As a result of this new FCC attitude, coordination efforts within the Amateur community, both formal and informal, are more effective than they have ever been in the past.

Although the actions of the 220SMA, in initially establishing a new band plan that was not equally fair to all user segments, could certainly be characterized as the act of special interests; the effort to reevaluate that action when injured parties identified their objection illustrates a sign of real coordination taking place. We believe that this atmosphere is better than regulation, any day.

As long as the inter-regional and National concerns are properly considered by each area, certainly the unique needs of the individual areas can best be coordinated by local Amateurs. **When regulation is determined appropriate, it should be the minimum necessary to obtain the objective.** Case in point is the idea that if a regulated non-repeater segment is determined as necessary, then the minimum size segment should be covered by the regulation. Local coordination bodies can designate additional bandwidth if it is appropriate for their area.

DEMOCRACY AT WORK

The following comments are aimed at Southern California because we believe that what is being dealt with is primarily a Southern California issue. The 220SMA is unique among the frequency coordination organizations here. It is a very democratic organization with all Officers and Frequency Coordination Board Members elected by the membership. It has existed in its present form for over a decade with only minor adjustments being made when they were obviously needed to make the tool work better. As is the case when democratic principals of organization are applied, sometimes the pendulum has to swing to one extreme before *gravity* pulls it back toward the center. We believe that is what has happened (is happening) here.

Actions to reconsider the band plan began almost immediately after adoption. Not the regular, on-going review that all coordinators perform, but a special effort whose need was immediately apparent to those of us that are involved in this arena on a regular basis. The ad-hoc committee described above is part of that effort. We believe that the normal forces that act to direct where and how Amateur resources are applied (and how Amateur frequencies are used), need to be allowed to work.

The 220SMA Frequency Board has as a priority effort, the determination of how the band can be used more effectively and more efficiently. I'm sure that if they don't do their job, they will be replaced by people who are willing to do it. The 110 kHz proposal discussed above was under investigation before the action on this NPRM was initiated and efforts to make it a reality are underway now. Regardless!

RECAP

The request for regulation establishing a non-repeater sub-band in the 222 to 225 MHz Amateur Radio Band has apparently been prompted by a single instance where a regional coordinating body responded to the majority of its members by granting what they wanted without adequate consideration for the rights of others. The idea that this should result in the submission of a request for regulation to "fix" the problem is ludicrous in our opinion. The idea that most of the ARRL Directors from out of the state acted to request a "fix" to a problem they don't have, while the involved Director voted against such action, is as equally difficult to understand.

VERA was and is just as upset about the results of that band plan vote as the weak signal community is. We fall under the jurisdiction of the 220SMA and our operations were significantly impacted. Alternative solutions have had to be implemented, but we believe that time will resolve the issues as Southern California Amateurs begin to understand the problems. **There is a democratic process at work and it should be allowed to function.**

If it is your opinion that regulation is appropriate in this case, then VERA asks that you consider the efforts of the 220SMA ad-hoc committee and **establish a minimum sub-band of 110 kHz**. We believe an allocation of that size will satisfy the majority of the areas.

VERA has supported Novice oriented operations on the 220 MHz Band for several years. **Amendment of the Novice Privileges as proposed is consistent with the operating authorizations granted the equivalent No-Code Technician.**